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## NACHMANIDES.

R. CHAYIM VITAL, in his "Book of the Transmigrations of Souls," gives the following bold characteristic of the two great teachers of Judaism, Maimonides and Nachmanides. Their souls both sprang forth from the head of Adam—it is a favourite idea of the Cabbalists to evolve the whole of ideal humanity from the archetype Adam—but the former, Maimonides, had his genius placed on the left curl of Adam, which is all judgment and severity, whilst that of the latter, Nachmanides, had its place on the right curl, which represents rather mercy and tenderness.

I start from these words in order to avoid disappointment. For Nachmanides was a great Talmudist, a great Bible student, a great philosopher, a great controversialist, and, perhaps, also a great physician; in one word, great in every respect, possessed of all the culture of his age. But as already indicated by the passage I have quoted by way of introduction, it is not of the Nachmanides in any of these excellent qualities that I wish to write here. For these aspects of his life and mind I must refer the reader to the works of Graetz, Weiss, Steinschneider, Perles and others. I shall mostly confine myself to those features and peculiarities in his career and works which will illustrate Nachmanides the tender and compassionate, the Nachmanides who represented Judaism from the side of emotion and feeling, as Maimonides did from the side of reason and logic.

R. Moses ben Nachman, or Bonastruc de Portas, as he was called by his fellow-countrymen, or Nachmanides, as he is

commonly called now, was born in Gerona about the year 1195. Gerona is a little town in the province of Catalonia in Spain. But though in Spain, Gerona was not distinguished for its philosophers or poets like Granada, Barcelona, or Toledo. Situated as it was in the North of Spain, Gerona was under the influence of Franco-Jewish sympathies, and thus its boast lay in the great Talmudists that it produced. I shall only mention the name of R. Zerachyah Halevi Gerundi—so-called after his native place—whose strictures on the Code of R. Isaac Alfassi, which he began as a youth of nineteen years, will always remain a marvel of critical insight and independent research. Nachmanides is supposed by some authors to have been a descendant of R. Isaac ben Reuben from Barcelona, whose hymns are still to be found in certain rituals. The evidence for this is however insufficient, but we know that he was a cousin of R. Jonah Gerundi, not less famous for his Talmudic learning than for his saintliness and piety. Nachmanides thus belonged to the best Jewish families of Gerona. Various great men are mentioned as his teachers, but we have only certainty about two. They are R. Judah ben Jakar, the commentator of the prayers, and R. Meir ben Nathan, of Trinquintaines. The mystic, R. Ezra, is alleged to have been his instructor in the Cabbala. This is not impossible, as he also was an inhabitant of Gerona, but it is more probable that he was initiated into the Cabbala by the just mentioned R. Judah, who also belonged to the mystical school.

Whoever his masters were, they must have been well satisfied with their promising pupil, for he undertook, at the age of fifteen, to write supplements to the code of R. Isaac Alfassi. Nor was it at a much later date that he began to compose his work, "The Wars of the Lord," in which he defends this great codifier against the strictures of R. Zerachyah, to which we have referred above. I shall in the course of this paper have further occasion to speak

of this latter work; for the present we will follow the career of its author.

Concerning the private life of Nachmanides very little has come down to us. We only know that he had a family of sons and daughters. He was not spared from the greatest grief that can befall a father, for he lost a son; it was on the day of Rosh-Hashanah. On the other hand, it must have been a great source of joy to him when he married his son Solomon to the daughter of R. Jonah, whom he revered as a saint and a man of God. As a token of the admiration in which he held his friend, the following incident may be mentioned. It seems that it was the custom in Spain to name the first child in a family after his paternal grandfather; but Nachmanides ceded his right in behalf of his friend, and thus his daughter-in-law's first son was named Jonah. Another son of Nachmanides whom we know of was Nachman, to whom his father addressed his letters from Palestine, and who also wrote *Novellæ* to the Talmud, still extant in MS. But the later posterity of Nachmanides is better known to fame. R. Levi ben Gerson (Ralbag) was one of his descendants; so was also R. Simon Duran; whilst R. Jacob Sasportas, in the eighteenth century, derived his pedigree from Nachmanides in the eleventh generation.

As to his calling, he was occupied as Rabbi and teacher, first in Gerona and afterwards in Barcelona. But this meant as much as if we would say of a man that he is a philanthropist by profession, with the only difference that the treasures of which Nachmanides disposed were more of a spiritual kind. For his livelihood he probably depended upon his medical practice.

I need hardly say that the life of Nachmanides, "whose words were held in Catalonia in almost as high authority as the Scriptures," was not without its great public events. At least we know of two.

The one was about the year 1232, on the occasion of the great struggle about Maimonides' "Guide of the Per-

plexed," and the first book of his *Mishneh Torah*. The Maimonists looked upon these works almost as a new revelation, whilst the Anti-Maimonists condemned both as heretical, or at least conducive to heresy. It would be profitless to reproduce the details of this sad affair. The motives may have been pure and good, but the actions were decidedly bad. People denounced each other, excommunicated each other, and did not (from either side) spare even the dead from the most bitter calumnies. Nachmanides stood between two fires. The French Rabbis, from whom most of the Anti-Maimonists were recruited, he held in very high esteem and considered himself as their pupil. Some of the leaders of this party were also his relatives. He had also, as we shall see later on, a theory of his own about God and the world little in agreement with that of Maimonides. It is worth noting that Nachmanides objected to calling Maimonides "our teacher Moses" (*Rabbenu Mosheh*), thinking it improper to confer upon him the title by which the Rabbis honoured the Master of the Prophets. The very fact, however, that he had some theory of the Universe shows that he had a problem to solve, whilst the real French Rabbis were hardly troubled by difficulties of a metaphysical character. Indeed, Nachmanides pays them the rather doubtful compliment that Maimonides' work was not intended for them, who were barricaded by their faith and happy in their belief, wanting no protection against the works of Aristotle and Galen, by whose philosophy others might be led astray. In other words, their strength lay in an ignorance of Greek philosophy, to which Spain would not aspire. Nachmanides was also a great admirer of Maimonides, whose virtues and great merits in the service of Judaism he describes in his letter to the French Rabbis. Thus, the only way left open to him was to play the part of the conciliator. The course of this struggle is fully described in every Jewish history. It is sufficient to say that, in spite of his great authority, Nachmanides was not

successful in his effort to moderate the violence of either party, and that the controversy was at last settled through the harsh interference of outsiders who well-nigh crushed Maimonists and Anti-Maimonists alike.

The second public event in the life of Nachmanides was his Disputation, held in Barcelona, at the Court and in the presence of King Jayme I., of Aragon, in the year 1263. It was the usual story. A Jewish convert, named Pablo Christiani, who burned with zealous anxiety to see his former co-religionists saved, after many vain attempts in this direction, applied to the King of Aragon to order Nachmanides to take part in a public disputation. Pablo maintained that he could prove the justice of the Messianic claims of Jesus from the Talmud and other Rabbinic writings. If he could only succeed in convincing the great Rabbi of Spain of the truth of his argument, the bulk of the Jews was sure to follow. By the way, it was the same Talmud which some twenty years back was, at the insinuation of another Jewish convert, burned in Paris, for containing passages against Christianity. Nachmanides had to conform with the command of the king, and, on the 21st of July, 1263, was begun the controversy which lasted for four or five days.

I do not think that there is in the whole dominion of literature less profitable reading than that of the controversies between Jews and Christians. These public disputes occasionally forced the Jews themselves to review their position towards their own literature, and led them to draw clearer distinctions between what they regarded as religion and what as folklore. But beyond this, the polemics between Jews and Christians were barren of good results. If you have read one you have surely read enough for all time. The same casuistry and the same disregard of history turn up again and again. Nervousness and humility are always on the side of the Jews, who know that, whatever the result may be, the end will be persecution; arrogance is always on the side of their antagonists, who

are supported by a band of Knights of the Holy Cross, prepared to prove the soundness of their cause at the point of their daggers. Besides, was there enough common ground between Judaism and 13th century Christianity to have justified the hope of a mutual understanding? The Old Testament was almost forgotten in the Church. The first person in the Trinity was leading a sort of shadowy existence in art, which could only be the more repulsive to a Jew on that account. The largest part, again, of Church worship was monopolised by devotion to the Virgin Mother, praying to the saints, and kneeling before their relics. And a Jew may well be pardoned if he did not entertain higher views of this form of worship than Luther and Knox did at a later period. It will thus not be worth our while to dwell much on the contents of this controversy, in which the essence of the real dispute is scarcely touched. There are only two points in it which are worth noticing. The first is that Nachmanides declared the Aggadeth in the Talmud to be only a series of sermons (he uses this very word), expressing the individual opinions of the preacher, and thus possessing no authoritative weight. The convert Pablo is quite aghast at this statement, and accuses Nachmanides of heterodoxy.

Secondly—and here I take leave to complete the rather obscure passage in the controversy by a parallel in his book, *Kez Hagggeulah*, quoted by Azaryah de Rossi—that the question of the Messiah is not of that dogmatical importance to the Jews that Christians imagine. For even if Jews supposed that their sins were so great that they forfeited all the promises made to them in the Scriptures, or that, on some hidden ground, it would please the Almighty never to restore their national independence, that would in no way alter the obligations of Jews towards the Torah. Nor is the coming of the Messiah desired by Jews as an end in itself. For it is not the goal of their hopes that they shall be able again to eat from the fruit of Palestine, or enjoy other pleasures there; not even the chance of the

restoration of sacrifices, and the worship in the Temple, is the greatest of Jewish expectations (connected with the appearance of the Messiah). What makes them long for his coming is the hope that they will there witness, in the company of the prophets and priests, a greater spread of purity and holiness than is now possible. In other words, the possibility for them to live a holy life after the will of God will be greater than now. But, on the other hand, considering that such a godly life under a Christian government requires greater sacrifices than it would under a Jewish king; and, considering again that the merits and rewards of a good act increase with the obstacles that are in the way of executing it—considering this, a Jew might even prefer to live under the King of Aragon than under the Messiah, where he would perforce act in accordance with the precepts of the Torah.

Now there is in this statement much which has only to be looked upon as a compliment to the government of Spain. I am inclined to think that if the alternative laid before Nachmanides had been a really practical one, he would have decided in favour of the clement rule of the Messiah in preference to that of the most cruel king on earth. But the fact that he repeats this statement in another place, where there was no occasion to be over polite to the Government, tends to show, as we have said, that the belief in the Messiah was not the basis on which Nachmanides' religion was built up.

The issue of the controversy is contested by the different parties; the Christian writers claim the victory for Pablo, whilst the Jewish documents maintain that the issue was with Nachmanides. In any case, "*Der Jude wird verbrannt.*" For in the next year (1264) all the books of the Jews in Aragon were confiscated and submitted to the censorship of a commission, of which the well-known Raymund Martini was, perhaps, the most important member. The books were not burned this time, but had to suffer a severe mutilation.



the anti-Christian passages, or such as were supposed to be so, were struck out or obliterated. Nachmanides' account of the controversy, which he probably published from a sense of duty towards those whom he represented, was declared to contain blasphemies against the dominant religion. The pamphlet was condemned to be burned publicly, whilst the author was, as it seems, punished with expulsion from his country. It is not reported where Nachmanides found a home during the next three years; probably he had to accept the hospitality of his friends, either in Castile or in the south of France; but we know that in the year 1267 he left Europe and emigrated to Palestine.

Nachmanides was, at this juncture of his life, already a man of about seventy. But it would seem as if the seven decades which he had spent in the Spanish Peninsula were only meant as a preparation for the three years which he was destined to live in the Holy Land, for it was during this stage of his life that the greatest part of his Commentary to the Pentateuch was written. In this work, as is agreed on all sides, his finest thoughts and noblest sentiments were put down.

Before proceeding to speak of his works, let us first cast a glance at his letters from Palestine, forming as they do a certain link between his former life and that which was to occupy him exclusively for the rest of his days. We have three letters, the first of which I shall translate here *in extenso*.

The letter was written soon after his arrival at Jerusalem in the year 1267. It was addressed to his son Nachman, and runs as follows:—

The Lord shall bless thee! my son Nachman, and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children (Ps. cxxviii.), and thy table shall be like that of our father Abraham! [This patriarch was famous in Jewish legend for his hospitality.] In Jerusalem, the Holy City, I write this letter. For, thanks and praise unto the rock of my salvation, I was thought worthy by God to

arrive here safely on the 9th of the month of Ellul, and I remained there till the day after the Day of Atonement. Now I intend going to Hebron, to the sepulchre of our ancestors, to prostrate myself, and there to dig my grave. But what am I to say to you with regard to the country? Great is the solitude and great the wastes, and to characterise it in short, the more sacred the places, the greater their desolation! Jerusalem is more desolate than the rest of the country: Judæa more than Galilee. But even in this destruction it is a blessed land. It has about 2,000 inhabitants, about 300 Christians live there who escaped the sword of the Sultan. There are no Jews. For since the arrival of the Tartars, some fled, others died by the sword. There are only two brothers, dyers by trade, who have to buy their ingredients from the Government. There the ten men (the necessary quorum for a congregation) meet, and on Sabbaths they hold service at their house. But we encouraged them, and we succeeded in finding a vacant house, built on pillars of marble with a beautiful arch. That we took for a synagogue. For the town is without a master, and whoever will take possession of the ruins can do so. We gave our offerings towards the repairs of the house. We have sent already to Shechem to fetch some scrolls of the Law from there which had been brought thither from Jerusalem at the invasion of the Tartars. Thus they will organise a synagogue and worship there. For continually people crowd to Jerusalem, men and women, from Damascus, Zobah (Aleppo), and from all parts of the country to see the Sanctuary and to mourn over it. He who thought us worthy to let us see Jerusalem in her desertion, he shall bless us to behold her again, built and restored, when the glory of the Lord will return unto her. But you, my son, and your brothers and the whole of our family you all shall live to see the salvation of Jerusalem and the comfort of Zion. These are the words of your father who is yearning and forgetting, who is seeing and enjoying, Moses ben Nachman. Give also my peace to my pupil Moses, the son of Solomon, the nephew of your mother. I wish to tell him . . . that there, facing the holy temple, I have read his verses, weeping bitterly over them, and he who caused his name to rest in the Holy Temple may increase your peace together with the peace of the whole community."

This letter may be illustrated by a few parallels taken from the appendix to Nachmanides' Commentary to the Pentateuch, which contains some rather incoherent notes which the author seems to have jotted down when he arrived in Jerusalem. After a lengthy account of the mate-

rial as well as the spiritual glories of the holy city of the past, he proceeds to say :—

“A mournful sight I have perceived in thee (Jerusalem) ; only one Jew is here, a dyer, persecuted, oppressed and despised. At his house gather great and small when they can get *Minyan*. They are wretched folk, without occupation and trade, consisting of a few pilgrims and beggars, though the fruit of the land is still magnificent and the harvests rich. Indeed it is still a blessed country, flowing with milk and honey. . . . Oh ! I am the man who saw affliction. I am banished from my table, removed far away from friend and kinsman, and too long is the distance to meet again. . . . I left my family, I forsook my house. And there with my sons and daughters, and with the sweet and dear children whom I have brought up on my knees, I left also my soul. My heart and my eyes will dwell with them for ever. . . . But the loss of all this and of every other glory my eyes saw, is compensated by having now the joy of being a day in thy courts (O Jerusalem), visiting the ruins of the Temple and crying over the ruined Sanctuary ; where I am permitted to caress thy stones, to fondle thy dust, and to weep over thy ruins. I wept bitterly, but I found joy in my tears. I tore my garments, but I felt relieved by it.”

Of some later date is his letter from Acra, which may be considered as a sort of ethical will, and which Mr. Abrahams, in his recent essay on “Jewish Wills,” has justly characterised as a eulogy of humility. This essay is still so fresh in the memory of the readers of this Review (III. 455) that I think there is no need to give extracts from this letter. The third letter, which is here published for the first time, is addressed to his son (R. Solomon ?) who was staying (in the service of the king) in Castile. It is in its chief content a eulogy of chastity. Probably Nachmanides had some dread of the dangerous allurements of the court, and he begs his son never to do anything of which he knows that his father would not approve, and to keep his father’s image always before his eyes.

As to his works, we may divide them into two classes. The one would contain those of a strictly halachic, whilst the other those of a more homiletic-exegetical and devotional character. As already indicated in the prelimi-

nary lines of this paper, I cannot dwell long on the former class of our author's writings. It consists either in glosses or Novellæ to the Talmud, in the style and manner of the French Rabbis, or of compendia of certain parts of the Law after the model set by R. Isaac Alfassi or Maimonides, or in defences of the "Earlier Authorities" against the strictures made on them by a later generation. A few words must be said with regard to these defences; for they reveal that deep respect for authority which forms a special feature of Nachmanides' writings. His *Wars of the Lord*, in which he defends Alfassi against R. Zerachyah of Gerona, was undertaken when he was very young, whilst his defence of the author of the *Halachoth Gedoloth* against the attacks of Maimonides, which he began at a much more mature age, shows the same deference "to the great ones of the past." Indeed, he says in one place, "We bow before them (the earlier authorities), and though their words are not quite evident to us we submit to them"; or, as he expresses himself elsewhere, "Only he who dips (deeply enough) in the wisdom of the 'old ones' will drink the (pure) old wine." But it would be unjust to the genius of Nachmanides to represent him as a blind worshipper of authority. Humble and generous in disposition, he certainly would bow before every recognised authority, and he would also think it his duty to take up the cudgels for him as long as there was even the least chance of making an honourable defence. But when this chance had gone, when Nachmanides was fully convinced that his hero was in the wrong, he followed no guide but truth. "Notwithstanding," he says in his introduction to the defences of the *Halachoth Gedoloth*, "my desire and delight to be the disciple of the Earlier Authorities, to maintain their views and to assert them, I do not consider myself a donkey carrying books. I will explain their way and appreciate their value, but when their views are inconceivable to my thoughts, I will plead in all modesty, but shall judge according to the sight of my

eyes. And when the Halachah is clear I shall flatter none, for the Lord gives wisdom in all times and ages." But on the other hand, there seems to have been a certain sort of literary agnosticism about Nachmanides which made it very difficult for him to find the "clear Halachah." The passage in the "Wars of the Lord" to the effect "that there is in the art (of commenting) no such certain demonstrations as in mathematics or astronomy," is well known and has often been quoted; but still more characteristic of this literary agnosticism is the first paragraph of the above-mentioned defences of the *Halachoth Gedoloth*. Whilst all his predecessors accepted, on the authority of R. Simlai, the number (613) of the commandments as an uncontested fact, and based their compositions on it, Nachmanides questions the whole matter, and shows that the passages relating to this enumeration of laws are only of a Haggadic nature, and thus of little consequence. Nay, he goes so far as to say, "Indeed the system how to number the commandments is a matter in which I suspect all of us (are mistaken) and the truth must be left to him who will solve all doubts" (namely, Elijah).

We should thus be inclined to think that this adherence to the words of the old authorities was at least as much due to this critical scepticism as to his conservative tendencies. For a more detailed description of his Halachic works we must refer the reader to the excellent essay of Lector Weiss, published in this Review (I., pp. 289 *seq.*). The space left to me I shall devote to the second class of his writings in which Nachmanides worked less after given types. These reveal to us more of his inner being, and offer us some insight into his theological system.

The great problem which seems to have presented itself to Nachmanides' mind was less how to reconcile religion with reason than how to reconcile man with religion. What is man? The usual answer is not flattering. He is an animal that owes its existence to the same instinct

that produces even the lower creatures, and he is condemned, like them, to go to a place of worm and maggot. But, may not one ask, why should a creature so lowly born, and doomed to so hapless a future, be burdened with the awful responsibility of knowing that he is destined "to give reckoning and judgment before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he"? It is true that man is also endowed with a heavenly soul, but this only brings us back again to the antithesis of flesh and spirit which was the stumbling-block of many a theological system. Nor does it help us much towards the solution of the indicated difficulty; for what relation can there be between this *materia impura* of body and the pure intellect of soul? And again, must not the unfavourable condition in which the latter is placed through this uncongenial society heavily clog and suppress all aspiration for perfection? "It is a house divided in itself," doomed to an everlasting contest, without hope for co-operation or even of harmony. The works "The Sacred Letter" and "The Law of Man" may be considered as an attempt by Nachmanides, if not to remove, at least to relieve the harshness of this antithesis. The former, in which he blames Maimonides for following Aristotle in denouncing certain desires implanted in us by nature as ignominious and unworthy of man, may, perhaps, be characterised as a vindication of the flesh from a religious point of view. The contempt in which that Greek, as Nachmanides terms Aristotle, held the flesh is inconsistent with the theory of the religionist, who believes that everything (including the body, with all its functions) is created by God, whose work is perfect and good, without impure or inharmonious parts. It is only sin and neglect that disfigure God's creations. I cannot enter into any further details of this work, but I may be permitted to remark that there is a very strong similarity between the tendency of the "Sacred Letter" and certain leading ideas of Milton. Indeed, if the first two chapters of the former were a little condensed and put into English,

they could not be better summarised than by the famous lines in the "Paradise Lost":—

Whatever hypocrites austere talk  
Of purity, and place, and innocence,  
Defaming as impure what God declares  
Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all.  
Our Maker bids increase ; who bids abstain  
But our destroyer, foe to God and man ?  
Hail, wedded love, mysterious law ! . . . .  
Far be it that I should write thee sin or blame,  
Or think thee unbecoming holiest place,  
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets.

The second of these two works, the "Law of Man" (*Torath Ha-adam*) may be regarded as a sanctification of grief, and particularly of the grief of griefs, death. The bulk of the book is halachic, treating of mourning rites, burial customs, and similar topics; but there is much in the preface which bears on our subject. For here again Nachmanides takes the opportunity of combating a chilling philosophy, which tries to arm us against suffering by stifling our emotions. "My son," he says, "be not persuaded by certain propositions of the great philosophers who endeavour to harden our hearts and to deaden our sensations by their idle comfort, which consists in denying the past and despairing of the future. One of them has even declared that there is nothing in the world over the loss of which it is worth crying, and the possession of which would justify joy. This is an heretical view. Our perfect Torah bids us to be joyful in the day of prosperity and to shed tears in the day of misfortune. It in no way forbids crying or demands of us to suppress our grief. On the contrary, the Torah suggests to us that to mourn over heavy losses is paramount to a service of God, leading us, as it does, to reflect on our end and ponder over our destiny."

This destiny, as well as Reward and Punishment in general, is treated in the concluding chapter of the "Law

of Man," which is known under the title of *Shaar Haggemul*. Nachmanides does not conceal from himself the difficulties besetting inquiries of this description. He knows well enough that in the last instance we must appeal to that implicit faith in the inscrutable justice of God with which the believer begins. Nevertheless he thinks that only the "despisers of wisdom" would fail to bring to this faith as full a conviction as possible, which latter is only to be gained by speculation. We shall have by and by occasion to refer to the results of this speculation. Here we must only notice the fact of Nachmanides insisting on the *bodily* resurrection which will take place after the coming of the Messiah, and will be followed by the *Olam Habba* (the life in the world to come) of which the Rabbis spoke. Irrational as this belief may look, it is only a consequence of his theory, which, as we have seen, assigns even to the flesh an almost spiritual importance. Indeed, he thinks that the soul may have such an influence on the body as to transform the latter into so pure an essence that it will become safe for eternity. For, as he hints in another place, by the continual practising of a thing the whole man, the body included, becomes so identified with the thing that we call him after it, just as the holy singer said: I am prayer, so that—

Oft converse with heavenly habitants  
 Begins to cast a beam on the outward shape,  
 The unpolluted temple of the mind,  
 And turns it by degrees to the soul's pure essence,  
 Till all be made immortal.

But if even the body holds such a high position as to make all its instincts and functions, if properly regulated, a service of God, and to destine it for a glorious future of eternal bliss and rejoicing in God, we can easily imagine what a high place the soul must occupy in the system of Nachmanides. To be sure it is a much higher one than that to which philosophy would fain admit her. A



beautiful parable of the Persian poet Yellaladeen (quoted by the late Mr. Lowell) narrates that "One knocked at the beloved's door, and a voice asked from within, 'Who is there?' and he answered, 'It is I.' Then the voice said, 'This house will not hold me and thee,' and the door was not opened. Then went the lover into the desert and fasted and prayed in solitude, and after a year he returned and knocked again at the door, and again the voice asked 'Who is there?' and he said 'It is thyself'; and the door was opened to him." And this is also the difference between the two schools—the mystical and the philosophical—with regard to the soul. With the rationalist the soul is indeed a superior abstract intelligence created by God, but like all his creations, has an existence of its own, and is thus separated from God. With the mystic, however, the soul is God, or a direct emanation from God. "For he who breathes into another thing (Gen. ii. 7) gives unto it something of his own breath (or soul), and as it is said in (Job xxxii. 8), And the soul of the Almighty giveth them understanding." This emanation, or rather immanence—for Nachmanides insists in another place that the Hebrew term employed for it (*Aziluth*) means a permanent dwelling with the thing emanating—which became manifest with the creation of man, must not be confounded with the moving soul (or the *Nephesh Chayah*), which is common to man with all creatures. It may be remarked here that Nachmanides endows all animals with a soul which is derived from the "superior powers," and its presence is proved by certain marks of intelligence which they show. By this fact he tries to account for the law prohibiting cruelty to animals, "all souls belonging to God." Their original disposition was, as would seem, according to Nachmanides, peaceful and harmless.

"About them frisking played  
All beasts of earth, since wild, and of all chace  
In wood or wilderness, forest or den."

It was only after man had sinned that war entered

into creation, but with the coming of the Messiah, when sin will disappear, all the living beings will regain their primæval gentleness, and probably be reinstituted in their first rights.

The special soul of man, however, or rather the "over-soul," was pre-existent to the creation of the world, treasured up as a wave in the sea or fountain of souls—dwelling in the eternal light and holiness of God. There, in God, the soul abides in its ideal existence before it enters into its material life through the medium of man; though it must be noted that, according to Nachmanides' belief in the Transmigration of souls, it is not necessary to perceive in the soul of every new born child, "a fresh message from heaven" coming directly from the fountain head. Nachmanides finds this belief indicated in the commandment of levirate marriage, where the child born from the deceased brother's wife inherits not only the name of the brother of his actual father, but also his soul, and thus perpetuates his existence on earth. The fourth verse of Ecclesiastes ii. Nachmanides seems to interpret to mean that the very generation which passes away comes up again, by which he tries to explain the difficulty of God's visiting the iniquity of the fathers on their children; the latter being the very fathers who committed the sins. However, whatever trials and changes the soul may have to pass through during its bodily existence, its origin is in God and thither it will return in the end, "just as the waters rise always to the same high level, from which their source sprang forth."

It is for this man, with a body so superior, and a soul so sublime—more sublime than the angels—that the world was *created*. I emphasize the last word, for the belief in the creation of the world by God from nothing (חדוש) forms, according to Nachmanides, the first of the three fundamental dogmas of Judaism. The other two also refer to God's relation to the world and man. They are the belief in God's Providence (השגחה) and his ידיעה. Creation from nothing is for Nachmanides the keynote to

his whole religion, since it is only by this fact, as he points out in many places, that God gains real dominion over nature. For as he says, as soon as we admit the eternity of matter, we must (logically) deny God even "the power of enlarging the wing of a fly, or shortening the leg of an ant." But the whole Torah is nothing if not a record of God's mastery in and over the world and his miraculous deeds. One of the first proclamations of Abraham to his generation was that God is the Lord (or Master) of the world (Gen. xviii. 33). The injunction given to Abraham, and repeated afterwards to the whole of Israel (Gen. xvii. 2, and Deut. xxi. 13) to be perfect with God, Nachmanides numbers as one of the 613 commandments, and explains it to mean that man must have a whole belief in God without blemish or reservation, and acknowledge him possessed of power over nature and the world, man and beast, devil and angel, power being attributable to him alone. Indeed, when the angel said to Jacob, "Why dost thou ask after my name" (Gen. xxxii. 29), he meant to indicate by his question the impotence of the heavenly host, so that there is no use in knowing their name, the power and might belonging only to God.

We may venture even a step further, and maintain that in Nachmanides' system there is hardly room left for such a thing as nature or "the order of the world." There are only two categories of miracles by which the world is governed, or in which God's Providence is seen. The one is the category of the manifest miracles, as the ten plagues in Egypt, or the crossing of the Red Sea; the other is that of the hidden miracles, which we do not perceive as such, because of their frequency and continuity. "No man," he declares, "can share in the Torah of our teacher, Moses, (that is, can be considered a follower of the Jewish religion,) unless he believes that all our affairs and events, whether they concern the masses or the individual, are all miracles (worked by the direct will of God), attributing nothing to nature or to the order of the world." Under this second

order he classifies all the promises the Torah makes to the righteous, and the punishments with which evil doers are threatened. For, as he points out in many places, there is nothing in the nature of the commandments themselves that would make their fulfilment necessarily prolong the life of man, and cause the skies to pour down rain, or on the other hand, would associate disobedience to them with famine and death. All these results can, therefore, only be accomplished in a supernatural way by the direct workings of God.

Thus miracles are raised to a place in the regular scheme of things, and the difficulty of regarding the possibility of God's interferences with nature disappears by their very multiplication. But a still more important point is, that, by this unbroken chain of miracles, which unconditionally implies God's presence to perform them, Nachmanides arrives at a theory establishing a closer contact between the deity and the world than that set forth by other thinkers. Thus, he insists that the term *Shechinah*, or *Kabod* (Glory of God), must not be understood, with some Jewish philosophers, as something separate from God, or as *glory created* by God. "Were this the case," he proceeds to say, "we could not possibly say, 'Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place,' since every mark of worship to anything *created* involves the sin of idolatry." Such terms as *Shechinah*, or *Kabod*, can therefore only mean the immediate divine presence. This proves, as may be noted in passing, how unphilosophical the idea of those writers is who maintain that the rigid monotheism of the Jews makes God so transcendental that he is banished from the world. As we see, it is just this assertion of his absolute Unity which not only suffers no substitute for God, but also removes every separation between him and the world. Hence also Nachmanides insists that the prophecy even of the successors of Moses was a direct communion of God with the prophet, and not, as others maintained, furnished through the medium of an angel.

The third fundamental dogma, ידיעה, includes, according to Nachmanides, not only the omniscience of God—as the term is usually translated—but also his recognition of mankind and his special concern in them. Thus, he explains the words in the Bible with regard to Abraham, “For I know him” (Gen. xviii. 19), to indicate the special attachment of God’s providence to the patriarch, which, on account of his righteousness, was to be uninterrupted for ever; whilst in other places we have to understand, under God’s knowledge of a thing, his determination to deal with it compassionately, as, for instance, when Scripture says that God knew (Exod. ii. 25), it means that his relation to Israel emanated from his attribute of mercy and love. But just as God knows (which means loves) the world, he requires also to be recognised and known by it. “For this was the purpose of the whole creation, that man should recognise and know him and give praise to his name,” as it is said, “Everything that is called by my name (meaning, chosen to promulgate God’s name), for my glory have I created it.”

It is this fact which gives Israel their high prerogative, for by receiving the Torah they were the first to know God’s name, to which they remained true in spite of all adversities; and thus accomplished God’s intention in creating the world. It is again by this Torah that not only the whole of Israel succeeded in being real prophets (at the moment of the Revelation), but also became *Segulah*, which indicates the inseparable attachment between God and his people, whilst the righteous who never disobey his will become the seat of his throne.

The position of the rest of humanity is also determined by their relation to the Torah. “It is,” Nachmanides tells us, “a main principle to know that all that man contrives to possess of knowledge and wisdom is only the fruits of the Torah or the fruits of its fruits. But for this knowledge there would be no difference between man and the lower animated species. The existence of the civilised nations of

the world does not disprove this rule, "both Christians and Mahometans being also the heirs of the Torah. For when the Romans gained strength over Israel they made them translate the Torah which they studied, and they even accommodated some of their laws and institutions to those of the Bible." Those nations, however, who live far away from the centre of the world (the Holy Land) and never come into contact with Israel are outside the pale of civilisation, and can hardly be ranked together with the human species. "They are the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory."

What Nachmanides meant by maintaining that all knowledge and wisdom were "the fruits of the Torah, or the fruits of these fruits" will be best seen from his commentary to the Pentateuch. I have already made use of this commentary in the preceding quotations, but being as it is the greatest of the works of Nachmanides, it calls for some special attention by itself. Its general tendency is an edifying one, or as he says "to appease the mind of the students (labouring under persecution and troubles) when they read the portion on Sabbaths and festivals, and to attract their heart by simple explanations and sweet words." The former occupy a considerable space. As Dr. Perles has shown in his able essay on this work of Nachmanides, our author neglected no resource of philology or archæology accessible in his age which could contribute to establish the "simple explanations" on a sound scientific basis. The prominent features of this Commentary, however, are the sweet words. Indeed, how sweet and soothing must have been to his contemporaries such words as we read at the end of the Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii.): "And behold there is nothing conditional in this Song. It is a charter testifying that we shall have to suffer heavily for our sins, but that, nevertheless, God will not destroy us, being reconciled to us (though we shall have no merits), and forgiving our sins for his name's sake alone. . . . And so our Rabbis said, Great is this song, embracing as it does

both the past (of Israel) and the future, this world and the world to come. . . . And if this Song were the composition of a mere astrologer we should be constrained to believe in it, considering that all its words were fulfilled. How much more have we to hope with all our hearts and to trust to the word of God, through the mouth of his prophet Moses, the faithful in all his house, like unto whom there was none, whether before him or after him." A part of these sweet words may also be seen in the numerous passages in which he attempts to account for various laws, and to detect their underlying principles.

For though "the Torah is the expression of God's simple and absolute will, which man has to follow without any consideration of reward," still this will is not arbitrary, and even that class of laws which are called *chukkim* (which means, according to some Jewish commentators, motiveless decrees) have their good reasons, notwithstanding that they are unfathomable to us. "They are all meant for the good of man, either to keep aloof from us something hurtful or to educate us in goodness, or to remove from us an evil belief and to make us know his name. This is what they (the Rabbis) meant by saying that commandments have a purifying purpose, namely, that man being purified and tried by them becomes as one without alloy of bad thoughts and unworthy qualities." Indeed, the soul of man is so sensitive to every impurity that it suffers a sort of infection even by an unintentional sin. Hence the injunction to bring a *Korban* (sacrifice) even in this case; the effect of the *Korban*, as its etymology (קרב) indicates, is to bring man back to God, or rather to facilitate this approachment. All this again is, as Nachmanides points out, only an effluence from God's mercy and love to mankind. He derives no benefit from it. "If he be righteous what can he give thee?" And even those laws and institutions which are intended to commemorate God's wonders and the creation of the world (for instance, the Passover festival and the Sabbath) are not meant

for his glorification, or, as Heine maliciously expressed it:—

Der Weltkapellenmeister hier oben  
Er selbst sogar hört gerne loben  
Gleichfalls seine Werke . . . . .

“For all our honour (we give to him), and the praising of his work are counted to him less than nothing and as vanity to him.” What he desires is that we may know the truth, and be confirmed in it, for this makes us worthy of finding in him “our protector and king.”

The lessons which Nachmanides draws from the various Biblical narratives also belong to these “sweet words.” They are mostly of a typical character. For true as all the stories in the Scriptures are, “the whole Torah is,” as he tells us (with allusion to Gen. v. 1), “the book of the sons of Adam,” or, as we should say, a history of humanity written in advance. Thus the account of the six days of the creation is turned into a prophecy of the most important events which would occur during the succeeding six thousand years, whilst the Sabbath is a forecast of the millennium in the seventh thousand, which will be the day of the Lord. Jacob and Esau are, as in the Haggadoth generally, the prototypes of Israel and Rome; and so is the battle of Moses and Joshua with Amalek indicative of the war which Elijah and the Messiah ben Joseph will wage against Edom before the Redeemer from the house of David will appear. Sometimes these stories convey both a moral and a pre-justification of what was destined to happen to Israel. So Nachmanides’ remarks with reference to Sarah’s treatment of Hagar (Gen. xvi. 6): “Our mother Sarah sinned greatly by afflicting this pain on Hagar, as also Abraham, who allowed such a thing to pass; but God saw her affliction and rewarded her by a son (the ancestor of a wild race), who would inflict on the seed of Abraham and Sarah every sort of oppression.” In this he alluded to the Islamic empires. Nor does he approve of Abraham’s conduct on the occasion of



his coming to Egypt, when he asked Sarah to pass as his sister (Gen. xii.). "Unintentionally," Nachmanides says, "Abraham, under the fear of being murdered, committed a great sin when he exposed his virtuous wife to such a temptation. For he ought to have trusted that God would save both him and his wife. . . . It is on account of this deed that his children had to suffer exile under the rule of Pharaoh. There, where the sin was committed, also the judgment took place." It is also worth noticing that, in opposition to Maimonides, he allows no apology for the attack of Simeon and Levi on the population of Shechem (Gen. xxxiv. 25). It is true that they were idolators, immoral, and steeped in every abomination; but Jacob and his sons were not commissioned with executing justice on them. The people of Shechem trusted their word, therefore they ought to have spared them. Hence Jacob's protest, and his curse against their wrath, which would have been quite unjustified had he looked on the action of his sons as on a good work (*Mizvah*).

Besides these typical meanings the matters of the Torah have also their symbolical importance, which places them almost above the sphere of human conception. They are neither exactly what they seem to be nor entirely what their name implies, but a reflex from things unseen, which makes any human interference both preposterous and dangerous. Of "the things *called* Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge," Nachmanides tells us that their mystery is very great, reaching into higher worlds. Otherwise, why should God, who is good and the dispenser of good, have prevented Adam from eating the fruit (of the latter), whilst in another place he says: "And if thou wilt be worthy, and understand the mystery of the word *Bereshit* (with which the Torah begins) thou wilt see that in truth the Scripture, though apparently speaking of matters here below (on earth), is always pointing to things above (heaven);" for "every glory and every wonder, and every deep mystery, and all beautiful wisdom are hidden in

the Torah, sealed up in her treasures." It is very characteristic of the bent of Nachmanides' mind, that he is perhaps the first Jewish writer who mentions the apocryphal book *The Wisdom of Solomon*, which he knew from a Syriac version, and which he believed to be authentic. And when we read there (vii. 7-25), "Wherefore I prayed and understanding was given to me. I called upon God and the spirit of wisdom came upon me. . . . For God has given me unmistakable knowledge to know how the world was made, and the operations of the planets. The beginning, ending, and midst of the times, the alterations and the turnings of the sun, the changes of the seasons, the natures of the living creatures and the furies of the wild beasts, the force of the spirits and the reasonings of men, the diversities of plants and the virtues of the roots. All such things that are either secret or manifest, them I knew"—the wise king was, according to Nachmanides (who quotes the passages which I have just cited), speaking of the Torah, which is identical with this wisdom, pre-existent to the creation, and on which God planned the world. Hence it bears the impression of all the universe, whilst on the other hand when it is said, "The king brought me into his chambers," those secret recesses of the Torah are meant in which all the great mysteries relating to Creation and to the Chariot (Ezekiel i.) are hidden.

We must content ourselves with these few sparks struck from the glowing fires of these inner compartments, which, imperfectly luminous as my treatment has left them, may yet shed some light on the personality of Nachmanides, which is the main object of my paper. But I do not propose to accompany the mystic into the "chambers of the king," lest we may soon get into a labyrinth of obscure terms and strange ways of thinking for which the Ariadne thread is still wanting. We might also be confronted by the Fifty Gates of Understanding, the Thirty-Two Paths of Wisdom, and the Two Hundred and Thirty-One Permu-

tations or Ciphers of the Alphabet, the key to which I do not hold. It is also questionable whether it would always be worth while to seek for it. When one, for instance, sees such a heaping on of nouns (with some Cabbalists) as the Land of Life, the Land of Promise, the Lord of the World, the Foundation Stone, Zion, Mother, Daughter, Sister, the Congregation of Israel, the Twin Roes, the Bride, Blue, End, Oral Law, Sea, Wisdom, etc., meant to represent the same thing or attribute, and to pass one into another, one cannot possibly help feeling some suspicion that one stands before a conglomerate of words run riot, over which the writer had lost all control. Indeed Nachmanides himself, in the preface to the above-mentioned commentary, gives us the kind advice not to meditate, or rather brood, over the mystical hints which are scattered over this work, "speculation being (in such matters) folly, and reasoning over them fraught with danger." Indeed, the danger is obvious. We have, to give one or two instances, already alluded to the theory which accepts the Torah or the Wisdom as an agent in the creation of the world. But the mystic pushes further, and asks for the Primal Being to which this Wisdom owes its origination. The answer given is from the great Nothing, as it is written, And the Wisdom shall be found from Nothing (בְּאֵין, Job xxviii. 12). What is intended by it, if it means anything, is probably to divest the first cause of every possible quality which by its very qualifying nature must be limiting and exclusive. Hence, God becomes the Unknowable. But suppose a metaphysical Hamlet, who, handling words indelicately, would impetuously exclaim, To be or not to be, that is the question?—into what abyss of utter negations would he drag all those who despair by his terrible Nothing. On the other hand, into what gross anthropomorphisms may we be drawn by roughly handling certain metaphors which some Cabbalists have employed in their struggling after an adequate expression of God's manifestations in his attribute of love, if we forget for a single moment that they are only

figures of speech, but liable to get defiled by the slightest touch of an unchaste thought.

But the greater the dangers that beset the path of mysticism, the deeper the interest which we feel in the mystic. In connection with the above-mentioned warning, Nachmanides cites the words from the Scriptures, "But let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the Lord, lest he break forth upon them" (Exod. xix. 24). Nevertheless, when we read the famous story in Chagigah (14 b.) of the four Rabbis who went up into the *Pardes*, or Garden of Mystical Contemplation, we do not withhold our sympathy, either from Ben Azai, who shot a glance and died, or from Ben Zoma, who shot a glance and was struck (in his mind). Nay, we feel the greatest admiration for these daring spirits, who, in their passionate attempt to "break through" the veil before the Infinite, hazarded their life, and even that which is dearer than life, their mind, for a single glance. And did R. Meïr deny his sympathies even to *Acher* or Elishah ben Abuya, who "cut down the plants"? He is said to have heard a voice from heaven, "Return, oh backsliding children, except *Acher*," which prevented his repentance. Poor fallen *Acher*, he mistook hell for heaven. But do not the the struggle and despair which led to this unfortunate confusion rather plead for our commiseration? Nachmanides, however, in his gentle way, did not mean to storm the heaven. Like R. Akiba, "he entered in peace, and departed in peace." And it was by this peacefulness of his nature that he gained an influence over posterity which is equalled only by that of Maimonides. "If not a profound thinker, like the author of the *Guide*, he had that which is next best—'he felt profoundly.'" Some writers of a rather reactionary character even went so far as to assign to him a higher place than to Maimonides. This is unjust. What a blank would there have been in Jewish thought but for Maimonides' great work, on which the noblest thinkers of Israel fed for centuries! As long

as Job and Koheleth hold their proper place in the Bible, and the Talmud contains hundreds of passages suggesting difficulties relating to such problems as the creation of the world, God's exact relation to it, the origin of evil, free will and predestination, none will persuade me that philosophy does not form an integral part of Jewish tradition, which, in its historical developments, took the shape which Maimonides and his successors gave to it. If Maimonides' *Guide*, which he considered as an interpretation of the Bible and of many Hagadoth in the Talmud, is Aristotelian in its tone, so is tradition too; even the Talmud in many places betrays all sorts of foreign influences, and none would think of declaring it un-Jewish on this ground. I may also remark in passing that the certainty with which some writers deprecate the aids which religion may receive from philosophy is a little too hasty. For the question will always remain, What religion? The religion of R. Moses Tako or R. Joseph Jaabez would certainly have been greatly endangered by the slightest touch with speculation, while that of Maimonides, Bachya, Bedresi and Del Medigo undoubtedly received from philosophy its noblest support, and became intensified by the union. But apart from that consideration, the sphere of the activity of these two leaders seems to have been so widely different that it is hardly just to consider them as antagonists, or at least to emphasize the antagonism too much. Maimonides wrote his chief work, the *Guide*, for the few elect, who, like Ibn Tabun for instance, would traverse whole continents if a single syllogism went wrong. And if he could be of use to one wise man of this stamp, Maimonides would do so at the risk of "saying things unsuitable for ten thousand fools." But with Nachmanides, it would seem, it was these ten thousand who formed the main object of his tender care. They are, as we have seen, cultivated men, indeed "students," having enjoyed a proper education; but the happy times of abstract thinking have gone, and being

under a perpetual strain of persecutions and cares, they long for the Sabbath and Festivals, which would bring them both bodily and spiritual recreation. They find no fault with religion, a false syllogism does not jar on their ears; what they are afraid of is, that being as they are, all the six days of work, engaged in their domestic affairs, religion may be too good a thing for them. "To appease their minds," to edify them, to make life more sweet and death less terrible to them, and to show them that even their weaknesses, as far as they are conditioned by nature, are not irreconcilable with a holy life, is what Nachmanides strove after. Now and then he permits them a glance into the mystical world in which he himself loved to move, but he does not care to stifle their senses into an idle contemplation, and passes quickly to some more practical application. To be sure the tabernacle is nothing but a complete map of the super-lunar world, but nevertheless its rather minute description is meant to teach us "that God desires us to work."

This tendency toward being useful to the great majority of mankind may account for the want of consistency of which Nachmanides was so often accused. It is only the logician who can afford to be thoroughgoing in his theory, and even he would become most absurd and even dangerous but for the redeeming fact "that men are better than their principles." But with Nachmanides these "principles" would have proved even more fatal. Could he, for instance, have upset authority in the face of the ten thousand? They need to be guided rather than to guide. But he does not want them to follow either the Gaon or anybody else slavishly, "the gates of wisdom never having been shut," whilst on the other hand he hints to them that there is something divine in every man, which places him at least on the same high level with any authority. Take another instance—his wavering attitude between the Maimonists and the anti-Maimonists, for which he was often censured. But apart from other reasons, at which we have

pointed above, might he not have felt that, in spite of his personal admiration of Maimonides' genius, he had no right to put himself entirely on the side where there was little room for the ten thousand who were entrusted to his guidance, whilst the French Rabbis, with all their prejudices and intolerance, would never deny their sympathies to simple, emotional folk.

This tender and absorbing care for the people in general may also account for the fact that we do not know of a single treatise by Nachmanides of a purely Cabbalistic character in the style of the *Sepher Hammishkal*, by De Leon, or the *Pardes*, by R. Moses Cordovora, or *Ez Hachayim* by R. Isaac Loria. The story that attributes to him the discovery of the *Zohar* in a cave in Palestine, from whence he sent it to Catalonia, needs as little refutation as the other story connected with his conversion to the Cabbalah, which is even more silly and of such a nature as not to bear repetition. The *Shushan Sodoth* and other mystical works passed also for a long time under his name, but their claim to this honour has been entirely disproved by the bibliographers, and they rank now among the *pseudepigraphica*. It is true that R. Nissim, of Gerona, said of Nachmanides that he was too much addicted to the belief in the Cabbalah, and as a fellow-countryman he may have had some personal knowledge about the matter. But as far as his writings go, this belief finds expression only in incidental remarks and occasional citations from the *Bahur*, which he never thrusts upon the reader. He chiefly asserted his mystical theories when philosophy called into question his deep sympathies with even lower humanity, and threatened to withdraw them from those ennobling influences under which he wanted to keep them.

Nachmanides' inconsistency has also proved beneficial in another respect. For mysticism has, by its over-emphasising of the divine in man, shown a strong tendency to remove God altogether and replace him by the creature of his hands. Witness only the theological bubble of

Sabbathai Zebi—happily it burst quickly enough—which resulted in mere idolatry (in more polite language, Hero Worship) on the one side, and in the grossest antinomianism on the other. Nachmanides, however, with a happy inconsistency, combined with the belief of man's origin in God, a not less strong conviction of man's liability to sin, of the fact that he *does* sin—even the patriarchs were not spared from it, as we have seen above—and that this sin does alienate man from God. This healthy control over man's extravagant idea of his own species was with Nachmanides also a fruit of the Torah, within the limits of which everything must move, the mystic and his aspirations included, whilst its fair admixture of 365 *Do not's* with 248 *Do's* preserved him from that "holy doing nothing" which so many mystics indulged in, and made his a most active life.

Much of this activity was displayed in Palestine, "the land to which the providence of God is especially attached," and which was, as with R. Judah Hallevi, always "his ideal home." There he not only completed his commentary to the Pentateuch, but also erected synagogues, and engaged in organising communities, whose tone he tried to elevate both by his lectures and his sermons. His career in Palestine was not long, for he lived there only about three years, and in 1270 he must already have been dead. A pretty legend narrates that when he emigrated to Palestine, his pupils asked him to give them a sign enabling them to ascertain the day of his death. He answered them that on that day a rift would be seen in the tombstone of his mother in the shape of a lamp. After three years a pupil suddenly noticed this rift, when the mourning over the Rabbi began. Thus, stone, or anything else earthly, breaks finally, and the life of the master passes into light.

What life meant to him, how deeply he was convinced that there is no other life but that originating in God, how deeply stirred his soul was by the consciousness of sin, what agonies the thought of the alienation from God



caused him, how he felt that there is nothing left to him but to throw himself upon the mercy of God, and how he rejoiced in the hope of a final reunion with him—of all these sentiments we find the best expression in the following religious poem, with which this paper may be concluded. Nachmanides composed it in Hebrew, and it is still preserved in some rites as a *Piyut*, recited on the Day of Atonement. Dr. M. Sachs, who gave a German version from it, declares it to be the finest, the most soul-stirring Hebrew hymn in existence. The version which I give here is an English adaptation from the German, kindly made for me by Mrs. Henry Lucas, but it conveys a very fair impression of the Hebrew original.

Ere time began, ere age to age had thrilled,  
I waited in his storehouse, as he willed ;  
He gave me being, but, my years fulfilled,  
I shall be summoned back before the King.

He called the hidden to the light of day,  
To right and left, each side the fountain lay,  
From out the stream and down the steps, the way  
That led me to the garden of the King.

Thou gavest me a light my path to guide,  
To prove my heart's recesses still untried ;  
And as I went, thy voice in warning cried :  
" Child ! fear thou him who is thy God and King ! "

True weight and measure learned my heart from thee ;  
If blessings follow, then what joy for me !  
If nought but sin, all mine the shame must be,  
For that was not determined by the King.

I hasten, trembling, to confess the whole  
Of my transgressions, ere I reach the goal  
Where mine own words must witness 'gainst my soul,  
And who dares doubt the writing of the King ?

Erring, I wandered in the wilderness,  
In passion's grave nigh sinking powerless :  
Now deeply I repent, in sore distress,  
That I kept not the statutes of the King !

With worldly longings was my bosom fraught,  
 Earth's idle toys and follies all I sought ;  
 Ah ! when he judges joys so dearly bought,  
     How greatly shall I fear my Lord and King !

Now conscience-stricken, humbled to the dust,  
 Doubting himself, in thee alone his trust,  
 He shrinks in terror back, for God is just—  
     How can a sinner hope to reach the King ?

Oh, be thy mercy in the balance laid,  
 To hold thy servant's sins more lightly weighed,  
 When, his confession penitently made,  
     He answers for his guilt before the King.

Thine is the love, O God, and thine the grace,  
 That folds the sinner in its mild embrace ;  
 Thine the forgiveness, bridging o'er the space  
     'Twixt man's works and the task set by the King.

Unheeding all my sins, I cling to thee ;  
 I know that mercy shall thy footstool be :  
 Before I call, Oh, do thou answer me,  
     For nothing dare I claim of thee, my King !

O thou, who makest guilt to disappear,  
 My help, my hope, my rock, I will not fear ;  
 Though thou the body hold in dungeon drear,  
     The soul has found the palace of the King !

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#### APPENDIX.

[This essay being intended to be as popular as possible, I have avoided interspersing the text with notes, but my authorities on the subject will be gathered from the following bibliographical survey.]

IN Steinschneider's Catalogue of the Bodleian Library, under the name of Moses Nachmanides, pp. 1947-65, all the works which are ascribed to this author are put together, and also discussed as to their authenticity. There are only to be added the new edition of the *Derasha* by Jellinek (Vienna, 1872), in which the variants from Schorr's MS. (*Hecchaluz* VIII. 162) are already incorporated ; a new edition of the *יכוח*, and the commentary to Is. lii.-liii. by Steinschneider (Berlin, 1860) ; a *Derasha* for *Rosh Hashanah*, ed. by H. Berliner (*Libanon*,

V., 564), and another Derasha at a Wedding (?), ed. by Schorr (*Hechaluz*, XII. 3).

For the literature on Nachmanides, besides the references given by Steinschneider, in his Catalogue, and the Addenda, p. cxviii. (cp. also the pedigree in col. 2,305), see also Graetz *Geschichte* VII., pp. 112-143, and p. 147 *seq.*; Michael *Or Hachayim*, No. 1,125, and Weiss *דור ודור*, v. 4 *seq.*; Perles' *Monatsschrift*, 1860, p. 175; Zom-ber, *ibid.* 421; and Z. Frankel, *ibid.*, 1868, p. 449, and this REVIEW, IV. 245 *seq.*

About Nachmanides' disputation we have to add M. Loeb in the *Révue des Etudes Juives*, XV. 1 *seq.*, and XVIII. 52 (about Abner), and Dr. Neubauer's Essay on Jewish Controversy in the *Expositor*, Vol. VII. (third series), p. 98 *seq.*, and the references given there. See also his article on the Bahir and the Zohar in this REVIEW, IV., 357 *seq.*

With regard to Nachmanides' mystical system see the references to S. Sachs (whose remarks are most suggestive), Krochmal, and Jellinek in Steinschneider, col. 1949 and 1964, Perles *Monatsschrift*, 1858, p. 83 *seq.*, and Steinschneider in *Hamazkir*, I., 34. Very useful is also Dr. B. Bernstein's *Die Schrifterklärung des Bachja b. Ascher ibn Chalawa* (Berlin, 1891), where the relation of this author to Nachmanides is discussed. See also Professor Kaufmann's *Die Geschichte der Attributenlehre*, and the references given in the index under this name. As to the attacks made by various authors on Nachmanides on account of his mystical inclinations, see Graetz, *ibid.*, p. 42 (note 3), and 143 (note 1), and references. Comp. also Dr. Schiller-Szinessy's (Catalogue I., No. 59) hypothesis about the author of the anonymous poem against Nachmanides in the *Hechaluz* II., 161. See also Steinschneider in *מורה מקום המורה* (*Mehize Nirdamim*), pp. 20 and 30. The Novellæ by his son R. Nachman, alluded to in the text, are in the University Library, Cambridge (Add. 1187, 2). See also Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens*, etc., I., p. 61 *seq.*, about the controversy between the Maimonists and Anti-Maimonists. The קין הנאולה is extant in the British Museum, MS. Add. 26, 894, and the passage quoted by De Rossi is to be found on p. 163b, but a few words are erased by the censor. As to the poem given at the end of this, see Zunz, *Synagogale Poesie*, p. 478; Landshut *Amude Haabodah* s. v., the references in Sachs' *Religiöse Poesie der Juden*, and Luzzatto in the *Ozar Nechmad*, II., 27. Comp. also Professor Cheyne's *The Origin of the Psalter*, p. 421.

I propose to give now the letter by Nachmanides referred to in the text. It was never published till now, but there exist two

copies of it in MS. ; the one in the Bibliothèque Nat., in Paris (see the Catalogue of this library, No. 710, 5), and the other in the University Library at Leyden (Cod. Warn, 59). The text given here is taken from the latter, whilst the variants given in the notes are from the Paris MS. My thanks are due to my friend, Dr. R. Gottheil, who provided me with a copy from this MS. Now as to the authenticity of this latter, Graetz, *ibid.*, p. 143, note 3 (who does not seem to have seen the MS.) is not satisfied. Steinschneider, however, both in his Catalogue of the Hebrew MSS. in the Leyden Library, pp. 265 and 266, and in his Catalogue of the Bodleian, Col. 1951, maintains no objections to ascribe it to Nachmanides. At least, there is nothing in its style and tone which would call in question Nachmanides' authorship. The letter, *the Leyden MS.*, is, as we shall see, incorporated in the will of a R. Solomon b. Isaac, which we give here, as it has a certain historical interest.

Who this R. Solomon was we have no means of ascertaining, his name occurring nowhere else. Steinschneider suggests that he lived in the fifteenth century, but puts a mark of interrogation. He would appear to us to represent the Jewish seatholder in the Middle Ages. He is no scholar by profession, but only devotes a certain part of the day to the study of the Torah. He is no ascetic either. He rather likes his dinner and enjoys his glass of wine, but he exercises a strict control over his comforts that they should not be gained at the expense of his religious scruples. What is most interesting is his self-taxation. Apart from tithing his income, which he takes care to make as ample as possible, he thinks that he has no right to enjoy the good things of this world without giving the poor some share in them. Hence he omits no opportunity, be the occasion the enjoyment of a tasteful dish, or a good bargain, or the birth of a child, or the marrying of a daughter, of making the needy rejoice with him. Almost touching is the care with which he recommends to his children the maintenance of the synagogues and the schools which his ancestors have built and endowed. However, all these noble features will be better seen from the text which is now to follow :—

(26b) אלו הם הגדרים שאני שלמה בן הקדוש ר' יצחק בן צדוק וצו"ל  
גודר על עצמי • כל זמן שאהיה בריא ובלא אונם שלא אוכל בכל יום  
עד שאלמוד דף אחת מתלמוד או מאחד מחבוריו כל זמן שאהיה זכור •  
ואם אעבור על זה מדעת שלא אשתה יין אותו היום או שאפרע חצי  
זהוב לצדקה • ושאקרא בכל שבוע הפרשה שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום •  
ואם אעבור על זה מדעת מלהשלים הפרשה כאמור למעלה שאפרע שני

זהובים לצדקה • ושעשה שלש סעודות בכל שבת בפת או בפירות ואם אעבור מדעת שאפרע חצי זהוב לצדקה • ועוד כדי להכניע יצרי שלא ליהנות בזה העולם אלא כדי צורך קיום גופי שלא אוכל בסעודה אחת בשר כאחת ולא יותר משני תבשילים • ולא אשתה יין יותר משני כוסות בסעודה אחת חוץ מכוס הברכה לבר שבתות וימים טובים וחנוכה וראשי חדרים וסעודת מצוה • ועוד שלא אעשה סעודת קבע בערב שבת • ולא בערב יום טוב שיהיה (27a) כהול • ושלא אוכל באותה סעודה יותר ממאכל אחד וכל זה כדי שאכנס לשבת או ליום טוב תאב לאכילה וזה הענין כל זמן שאהיה נזכר ואם אעבור על זה מדעת שאענה ליום אחר או שאפרע לצדקה ב' זהובים • וגם שלא אוכל הדגה קרוי בלשון לעז ברבוטה 'ובלשון ערבי שולי כל זמן שאהיה נזכר • ובאלו הימים הנזכרים שלא אוכל יותר מנ' תבשילין ולא אשתה יותר משלשה כוסות של יין חוץ מכוס של ברכה זולתי אם יהיה כוס של מצוה • וזה על התנאים הכתובים לעיל • ושלא אשבע בשם ולא אזכור שם שמי' לבטלה • ולא אקלל לשום אדם בשם • ואם ח"ו אעבור על דבר זה שלא אשתה יין באותו יום אלא כוס אחד חוץ מכוס של ברכה אם אזכור לזה • ואם יהיה לאחר אכילה שיהיה זה הקיום ליום אחר וזה אם לא אשכח • ואם אזכור ואעבור על זה שאפרע חצי זהוב לצדקה • ושאקום בכל לילה ולילה לשבח לבורא ולהתחנן ולהודות לפניו בלילות שהן ראויין להודות ובלילות האחרות לזכר שירות ותושבחות (27b) ובכל לילה שאהיה בביתי ואהיה בריא בלא שום אונס ולא למה שנזכר למעלה שלא אשתה אותו יום יין אלא כוס אחד חוץ מכוס של ברכה אם לא יהיה מהימים הנזכרים למעלה ועוד להפריש מהוצאתי מכל הדברים הנזכרים למטה • ואלו הן מכל מלבוש שעשה לאנשי ביתי ובני מכל שיהיה מהסכום עשרה זהובי' ולמעלה שאתן פשוט לכל עשרה זהובים • ואם אקנה בהמה או עבד או שפחה או קרקע שאפרע מזה הסכום • ואם אקנה בנדים לסחורה שאתן שנים פשוטים לכל בגד שקורין פאסה • וכל פעם שאהיה מחוייב לברך הגומל שאתן זהוב חוץ מהליכת הדרך שלא אחייב ליתן זה הזהוב אלא היום שאניע לביתי בלבד ושאר הימים שני פשוטין ביום • ומכל עוף ועוף שיקנו לי או אקנה שיהיה מזהוב למעלה שאתן פשוט ומה שיהיה מזהוב ולמטה עד חצי זהוב חצי פשוט • ומה שיהיה מחצי זהוב ולמטה עד פשוט שאתן פרוטה אחת • ומכל משוי (28a) של עצים שאקנה או יקנו לי שאתן בשוט • ומכל גדי שיקנו לי או אקנה שני פשוטין • ומכל דג שאקנה או יקנו לי שיהיה מזהוב ולמעלה

<sup>1</sup> See Lewysohn's *Zoologie des Talmuds*, § 338; comp. L. Löw, *Gesammelte Schriften*, II. 262-5.

שאתן לכל זהוב פשוט. ואם יזכני הבורא ית' להשיא בני ולראות חופתם שאצוה אוהם שיתנו מכל מה שיקחו עם נשותיהם הן במעות הן בשוה זהוב מכל מאה זהובים. וכן אם יזכני השי"ת לבנים זכרים בשוה שאתן לכל בן שיהיה לי מה שיראה לפי מה שתשיג ידי באותו זמן. ויותר על זה בכל שנה בין ראש השנה ויום הכפורים שאעשה חשבון ומה שיהיה לי יותר על שנה שעברה אחר ההוצאות שאתן ממנו העשור ואם לא אוכל לדקדק החשבון שאתן אותו באומד לפי מה שנראה לי. ואכלול זה העשור עם כל מה שיעלה באלה הדברים הנזכרים ויהיה הכל מונח ביחד לדבר מצוה לכל מה שיראה לי. ואם יראה לי ליתן אותו במקום שאפשר להרויח בו כדי לעשות ממנו דבר מצוה שיהיה הרשות בידי. וכל מה שכתבתי עלי מאלו העניינים הנזכרים לא אתחייב בהם אלא כל זמן שאהיה זכור מהם וכדי להזכר מהם קבלתי עלי לקרות אותם (?) בשבוע (28b) אם אזכור. ואני מצוה לבני ישמרם האל ויזכרם לתורתו ולמצותיו שיקבלו עליהם מאלו הנדרים כל דבר שיכלו לעמוד בו שיצוו בהן לבניהם ובניהם לבניהם עד סוף כל הדורות. וכל הדוחק עצמו להשתדל ולהרבות בנדרים אלו תבא עליו ברכה:

וזה נוסח הצוואה שצויתי אני שלמה הנזכר לבני ישמרם האל. שיתפלל כל אחד מהם ג' פעמים בכל יום וישיתדל שתהא תפלתו בכוונה. ושתהא בביה"מ או בבית הכנסת עם הצבור וישיתדל כל אחד מהם כל יכלתו לקיים הבתי כנסיות והבתי מדרשות וההקדשות שבנו והקדישו אבותינו ז"ל ואני ג' כ. וישיתדל כל אחד לעשות כמותם בענין שלא יפסק מעשה הטוב מהם כלל. ושיהיה לכל אחד מהם תמיד בביתו ספסל ועליו סופר או שנים מתלמוד או מאחד מחבוריו בענין שיפתח ספר בבואו לביתו ויקרא מה שיוכל לקרות ושיחייב עצמו לקרות באיזה ספר שירצה ארבעה שורות (29a) לפחות קודם שיאכל ושיהיה מחוייב לקרות בכל שבוע הפרשה שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום ושישלים בכל שבת שלש סעודות אם יוכל בפת ואם לאו בפירות. ושיהיה תמיד ביישן ורחמן וגומל חסד כי באלו המדות נתפרסם זרע ישראל ושתהיה כוונתו ומחשבתו יומם ולילה לעבודת הבורא ית' ועשות מה שיוכל מצדקה וחסד כי זה ישאר לאדם מכל עמלו וישיתדל להנהיג עצמו במאכליו ומשתיו כפי יכולתו במה שכת' רבינו משה ז"ל בפרק רביעי מהלכות דעות כדי שיתקיים בהם מקרא שכתוב צדיק אוכל לשובע נפשו ושיזהר שלא להזכיר שם שמים לבטלה ושיהיה משאו ומתנו באמונה וישיתדל שיהיה הין שלו צדק. ושיהיה מחוייב כל אחד מהם ללמד בניו תלמוד תורה כל יכלתו וישיתדל שיהיה אחד מבניו תורתו אומנתו כל ימי חייו ושידריך בניו ואנשי ביתו בדרך ישרה ועבודת הבורא. וכל שיהיה מדם תורתו אומנתו שיתחייבו

שאר זרעו לסייעו בכך יכלתם ולהשתדל ולהתעסק בממונו כדי שיוכל לעבור זמנו ולכלכל בניו ואנשי ביתו בכבוד (29b) ושיאהב גדולם לקטנם בבניו ושיכבד קטנם לגדלם כאביו בענין שיראה כל אחד מהם שהוא מזרע כשר ומהמשפח' שהוא (?) ושיאהב ושיכבד לת"ח כדי שיוכה למה שאז"ל כל דרחי' רבנן הוו ליה בני רבנן. וכל דמוקיר רבנן הויין ליה חתני רבנן ושיהיה כל אחד מהם לקרות הצואה הזאת פעם אחת בשבוע ושישלים אותה ויקבל אותה עליו שיהא ג"כ מחוייב לצוות לבניו לקבל אותה עליהם ושיצוו לבניה' לקבל אותה ג"כ עליהם ובניהם לבניהם דור אחר דור עד סוף כל הדורות כדי לקיים מקרא שכתוב כי ידעתי למען אשר יצוה ארץ בניו ואת ביתו אחריו ושמרו דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט. ויתקיים בהם מקרא שכתוב ואני זאת בריתי איתם אמר ה' רוחי אשר עליך ודברי אשר שמתי בפיו לא ימושו מפיו ומפי זרעך אמר ה' מעתה ועד עולם. ובכל פעם שיקראו זאת הצואה שיקראו אלו שני אגרות הכתובים למטה ששיגר הר' משה בר נחמן ז"ל לבניו כדי להועיל מכל אותם ענינים שצוה בהם לבניו ויקראו ג"כ אלו הנדרים שקבלתי אני על (30a) עצמי כדי שיקיימו בהם מה שיוכלו לעמוד בו כי בקריאת כל אלו הדברים יהיה להם תועלת גדולה וצריך להשתדל לשים לבו עליהם בענין שיועילו לו. ואם ח"ו יארע שום מאורע לשום אחד מהם שימנעו בשבילו לקיים דבר מכל הכתוב למעלה שיהיה מחוייב באותו יום או למחרתו שלא ישתה יין או שיחסר דבר ממאכלו. או יתן צדקה לעניים בקנס על אותו המאורע בענין שישמור כל זה תמיד כדי שיקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים ותהיה יראת ה' על פניהם לבלתי יחטאו כי יראת לחיים. האגרת ששלח הר' רמב"ן ז"ל מארץ ישראל לברצילונה. שמע בני מוסר אביך.....<sup>1</sup>

(31b) וזאת האגרת ששלח הרב הנזכר בהיותו בארץ ישראל לקאשטיליא בהיות בנו עומד לפני המלך. כאשר ייסר איש את בנו ה' אלהיך מיסריך. יברכך וישמרך<sup>2</sup> מן החטא ישמרך מן העונות. הנה אדונינו המלך דוד<sup>3</sup> הוליד בן חכם ונבון אשר כמוהו לא היה לפניו ואחריו לא (32a) קם כמוהו והוא צוה לו לאמר ושמרת את משמרת ה' אלהיך ללכת בדרכיו ולשמור חוקותיו ומצותיו ומשפטיו ועדותיו כאשר צוה ככתוב בתורת משה עבדך למען תשכיל את כל אשר תעשה ואת כל אשר תפנה שם. ועוד אמר לו ואתה שלמה בני דע את אלהי אביך ועבדהו בלב שלם ובנפש חפצה כי כל לבבות דורש ה' וכל יצר

<sup>1</sup> Here follows the well-known letter of Nachmanides to his son.

<sup>2</sup> P. adds ישמרך.

<sup>3</sup> P. adds ע"ה.

מחשבות מבין אם תדרשנו ימצא לך ואם<sup>1</sup> תעזבונו יזניחך לעד • ואתה בני  
תמדוד עצמך כנגד שלמה ותמצא כי אתה תולעת ולא איש<sup>2</sup> רמש מרמש  
האדמה • ואעפ"כ אם תדרשנו יגדלך וממעלה מעלה יעלך ואם תעזבונו  
זרוק<sup>3</sup> ועזוב אתה • בני הוי זהיר בק"ש שחרית וערבית ובתפלה שלשה  
פעמים ביום • בני על אכילתך תברך לפניה ולאחריה כמשפט • בני על  
כל פנים תקרא הפרשה<sup>4</sup> בכל שבת ושבת ויהיה לך חומש מדוקדק ויהיה  
עמך בכל אשר תלך ולא ימוש מפיד<sup>5</sup> והגית בו יומם ולילה כי אז תצליח  
את דרכיך ואז תשכיל • בני השלך על ה' הבך והדבר מוכן ומזומן<sup>6</sup> לפניך  
תחשוב אותו רחוק<sup>7</sup> ממך מאד • ודע כי אין פיד שלך ואין ירך בגבולך אלא  
הכל (32b) ביד האלהים לעשות תן לבך תמיד אם ה' לא יבנה בית שוא  
עמלו בוניו בו • ואם ה' יבננו שוא עמלו הורסיו בו • אם ה' לא ישמור עיר  
שוא שקד שומר • ואם ה' ישמור עיר חנם טרח שומר<sup>8</sup> • ודע כי החכמי  
הראשונים השוו המלך והאשה שומר<sup>9</sup> לעמוד בחצר באימה<sup>10</sup> ובמוכר • ומן  
הבנים (בנות ?) הזהר מאד לבלתי צא (צאת ?) בעקבותם כלל • דע כי  
אלהינו שונא זמה הוא ולא מצא בלעם הרשע מקום להריע<sup>11</sup> לישראל רק  
בבנות מואב שכל הזונה עם בנות העמים מחלל בריתו של אברהם אבינו<sup>12</sup>  
שזו היא כוונת המילה ומוציא עצמו מכלל ישראל שהם עם אלהי אברהם •  
ונקרא מועל באלהים שנא' אנחנו מעלנו באלהינו ונשב נשים נכריות מעמי  
הארץ ונקרא אשם ויקם עורא הכהן ויאמר אליהם אתם מעלתם ותושיבו  
נשים נכריות מעמי הארץ להוסיף על אשמת ישראל • ונקרא פושע שנא'  
כי הרבינו לפשוע בדבר הזה ונקרא בוגד ותועבה ומחלל קדש ה' אשר  
אהב ומשניא ומשניא עצמו לשמים שנא' בגדה יהודה ותועבה נעשתה  
בישראל ובירושלם (33a) כי חלל יהודה קדש ה' אשר אהב ובעל  
בת אל נכר יכרת ה' לאשר יעשנה ער ועונה מאהלי יעקב<sup>13</sup> אשר הם  
המגוישים מנחה ועובדים את השם הנכבד מדה כנגד מדה הוליד<sup>14</sup> בנים  
לאלהים אחרים וה' צבאות יכרת אותם מהיות לו זרע עובר ה' הם<sup>15</sup> היו

<sup>1</sup> P. adds תניחנו, but the word is provided with dots, probably as a sign that it has to be cancelled.

<sup>2</sup> P. reads: ותמצא שאתה רמה ותולעה ולא אינו.

<sup>3</sup> P., נזח.

<sup>4</sup> P., הסדר.

<sup>5</sup> P., מפניך.

<sup>6</sup> P., המוכן והמזומן.

<sup>7</sup> P., מרוחק.

<sup>8</sup> P. adds וגומר.

<sup>9</sup> P. reads, והאש השמר. In the Leyden MS. the word והאשה is provided with dots, but it is not clear which letters they are meant to cancel.

<sup>10</sup> P. adds וביראה.

<sup>11</sup> P., להכניע.

<sup>12</sup> P. adds ע"ה.

<sup>13</sup> P. adds ומגיש מנחה לה' צבאות לומר שיכרית זרעו ולא יהיה לו ער

ועונה באהלי יעקב.

<sup>14</sup> P. מוליד.

<sup>15</sup> Missing in P.



פושעי ישראל בנופן והב"ה ישיב עליהם אופן • בני בכל עת תזכור אותי  
 ותהיה דמות דיוקני לנגד עיניך לא<sup>1</sup> תסור מלפניך • וכל דבר אשר ידערת  
 בי שאני מואם אותו אל תאהב אתה<sup>2</sup> לעשותו • עמי תמיד תהיה • שומר<sup>3</sup>  
 מצותי וחיה • יכון<sup>4</sup> תמיד על שפתיך מקרא שכתוב גר אנכי בארץ אל  
 תסתר ממני (33b) מצותיך והאל הטוב והמטיב ירבה שלותיך<sup>5</sup> • ויאריך  
 בנעימים שנותיך ויגדל כבודך והודך כחפצך וכחפץ אביך זה ילדך משה  
 בר נחמן ז"ל • תם ונשלם :

## TRANSLATION.

These are the regulations which I, Solomon, the son of the martyr, Rabbi Isaac, the son of Zado, of blessed memory, draw up for myself. That as long as I am in good health, and free from accident, and think of it, I shall not eat before I have studied one page of the Talmud or of its commentaries. Should I transgress this rule intentionally, I must not drink wine on that day, or I shall pay half a *Zehub* to charity. Again, that I shall read every week the Lesson twice in the Hebrew text, and once in the Aramaic version. Should I intentionally omit completing the Lesson as above, then I must pay two *Zehubs* to charity. Again, that I shall take three meals every Sabbath, consisting of bread or fruit. Should I omit to do so, I must give in charity half a *Zehub*. Again, in order to subdue my appetites, and not to enjoy in this world more than is necessary for the maintenance of my body, I must not eat at one meal more than one course of meat, and not more than two courses altogether; nor must I drink more than two cups of wine at one meal, apart from the blessing-cup (over which grace is said), except on Sabbath, Festivals, Chanukah, New Moon, and at other religious meals (for instance, wedding-dinners and similar festive occasions). Again, I must not have any regular meal on the day preceding Sabbath or Festivals. I must not have during the day more than one course, so that I shall enter upon the holy day with a good appetite. Should I transgress this resolve intentionally I shall have to fast a day, or to pay two *Zehubs*. Again, that I shall not eat the fish called *burbot*,<sup>6</sup> if I think of it. Again, even on the above-mentioned days, I must not eat more than three courses at a meal, nor drink more than three cups of wine, exclusive of the blessing-cup. Again, . . . I must

<sup>1</sup> P., ואל.<sup>2</sup> P. אל תאהב אותה.<sup>3</sup> P., שמור.<sup>4</sup> P., בכון.<sup>5</sup> P., שלומך.<sup>6</sup> The lawfulness of eating this fish (= sturgeon?) was contested for many centuries, and at the present time the controversy continues.

not swear by God, nor mention the name of Heaven without a purpose, nor curse any man in the name of God. Should I, God forbid, transgress it, I must not drink more than one cup of wine on that day exclusive of the blessing-cup. Should I, however, transgress this after dinner, I must abstain from wine the following day. Should I transgress it, I have to pay half a *Zehub*. Again, that I shall get up every night to praise God, to supplicate for His mercy, and to confess. On those nights when confession is not to be said (Sabbaths and Festivals), I shall say hymns and psalms. This I shall do when I am in my house, and in good health, free from any accident. Should I transgress it, I shall drink not more than one cup of wine the following day, except the blessing cup. I again take upon myself to give to charity the following proportion of my expenditure—from each dress which I shall have made for myself or for one member of my family, costing more than ten *Zehubs*, I must pay one *Pashut* for each ten *Zehubs*. Again, if I should buy an animal, or a slave, or a female slave, or ground, that I shall also pay at the same rate. And if I shall buy clothes for sale, called *fashas*, I shall pay two *Pashuts* for each garment. As often as I am compelled to say the benediction of *Hagomel* (after having escaped danger), I shall pay a *Zehub*, except when I am travelling (also involving danger in those times), in which case I shall have to pay a *Zehub* on my arrival, and two *Pashuts* daily during the journey. Again, from every kind of fish bought for me, costing more than a *Zehub*, I shall pay a *Pashut* for each *Zehub*. And also, if I shall be worthy by God to marry my children, and to be present at their wedding, to cause them to give to the poor from the dowry brought to them by their wives, whether in money or in kind, at the rate of one per cent. If God will make me worthy of having sons, I must give to charity according to my means at the time.

I shall also, between New Year and the Day of Atonement in each year, calculate my profits during the past year and (after deducting expenses), give a tithe thereof to the poor. Should I be unable to make an accurate calculation, then I shall give approximately. This tithe I shall put aside, together with the other money for a religious (charitable) purpose, to dispose of it as I shall deem best. I also propose to have the liberty of employing the money in any profitable speculation with a view of augmenting it. But all I have written above I shall not hold myself guilty if I transgress, if such transgression be the result of forgetfulness; but in order to guard against it, I shall read this through weekly.

I also command my children to take upon themselves as many of the above regulations as may be in their power to observe, and also to

bind it, from generation to generation, upon their children. And he who carries them out, and even adds to them, at pain of discomfort to himself, shall merit a special blessing. And this is the text of the will which I, the above-mentioned Solomon, draw up for my children, may God preserve them. That they shall pray thrice daily, and endeavour always to utter their prayers with devotion. Again, that this prayer shall be said in the *Beth Hamidrash* (a prayer-house, which also served as a house of study), or in the synagogue together with the congregation. Again, that they shall apply all their powers to maintain the synagogues and the houses of study, which our ancestors have built, as well as to continue the endowments established by my ancestors and myself. They must always endeavour to imitate them, so that goodness shall never cease from among them. Again, that they shall always have a chair on which a volume of the Talmud, or any other Talmudical work, shall lie; so that they would always open a book when they come home. At least, they shall read in any book they like four lines before taking their meal. Again, that they shall read every week the Lesson twice in the Hebrew text, and once in the Aramaic version. Again, to take three meals on the Sabbath. . . .

Again, that they shall be always modest, merciful, and charitable, for these are the qualities by which the children of Israel are known. Let also all their thoughts and meditations be always directed to the service of the Lord, and be as charitable and benevolent as possible, for this is all that remains to man of his labour. They shall also endeavour to regulate their diet according to the rules laid down by Rabbi Moses (Maimonides), so as to fulfil the words of Scripture: "The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul." And let them always be careful not to mention the name of God in vain, to be honest in all business transactions, and let their *yea* be always *yea*. They shall always have the obligation to train their children to the study of the Torah, but one shall devote his life to the study thereof. And it shall be incumbent upon his brothers to support this one, and to invest his moneys, and to provide for him that he and his family should live respectably, so that he be not distracted by worldly cares from his studies. Let also the elder love the younger brothers as their own children, and the younger respect the elder as a parent. Thus they may always bear in mind that they are of a God-fearing family. Let them love and honour scholars, thus to merit the honour of having scholars for their sons and sons-in-law. This will they shall themselves read weekly, and shall also make it incumbent upon their children, from generation to generation, to read weekly, in order to fulfil what is written (Gen. xviii. 19), "For I

know him that he will command his children, etc.," and also the words of Isaiah (lix. 21), "And this is my covenant, etc." But as often as they shall read this will, they shall also read the two letters below written, which Rabbi Moses ben Nachman sent to his sons, with a view of being serviceable to them in many respects. Should, heaven forbid, they be by any sad accident prevented from fulfilling the injunctions above laid down, they must fine themselves by not drinking wine on that day, or by eating one course less at the dinner, or by giving some fine to charity. . . .

This is the letter which Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, of blessed memory, sent from the Holy Land to Barcelona:—"Hearken, my son, to the instruction of thy father. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

And this is the letter which the above-mentioned Rabbi sent from the Holy Land to Castile, when his son was staying before the king (in his service):—" . . . May God bless you, and preserve you from sin and punishment. Behold, our master, King David, bore a son, wise and of understanding, like unto whom there was never one before or after. Nevertheless he said to him (1 Kings ii. 2): 'And keep the charge of the Lord thy God,' etc. He also said to him: 'And thou, my son, know the God of thy father' (1 Chron. xxviii. 9). Now, my son, if thou wilt measure thyself with Solomon, thou wilt find thyself a worm—not a man, merely an insect; nevertheless, if thou wilt seek God, he will make thee great; and if thou wilt forsake him, thou wilt be turned out and forsaken. My son, be careful that thou readest the Shema morning and evening, as well as that thou sayest the daily prayers. Have always with thee a Pentateuch written correctly, and read therein the Lesson for each Sabbath. . . . 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord,' for the thing which thou believest far from thee is often very near unto thee. Know, again, that thou art not master over thy words, nor hast power over thy hand; but everything is in the hand of the Lord, who formest thy heart. . . . Be especially careful to keep aloof from the women [of the court?]. Know that our God hates immorality, and Balaam could in no other way injure Israel than by inciting them to unchastity. [Here come many quotations from Malachi and Ezra.] . . . My son, remember me always, and let the image of my countenance be never absent from before thine eyes. Love not that which I hate. . . . Let always be upon thy lips the words of the Psalmist, 'I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me' (Ps. cxix. 19); and God, who is good and the dispenser of good, shall increase thy peace and prolong thy life in peace and happiness, and

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<sup>1</sup> See note 1, page 115. Cf. this REVIEW, III., 455.

promote thy honour according to thy wish and the wish of thy father who bore thee, Moses ben Nachman."

In conclusion, I have also to thank the authorities of the University Library, in Leyden, for the promptness and liberality with which they have placed at my disposal the MS. of which I have made use here.

S. SCHECHTER.

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